

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 5788

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: SREF

SUBJ: STATUS OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AT KLONG YAI

REF: A. CANBERRA 3780; B. P 150649Z FROM CINCPACREP GUAM

1. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED PERIODIC REPORTS ON CONDITIONS IN REFUGEE CAMPS FROM VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS WORKING IN THAILAND. OR MOST RECENT INFORMATION ON KLONG YAI CAME FROM DR. HEINRICH QUILISCH OF THE ICR. WHEN QUILISCH VISITED THE CAMP IN LATE MAY, HE FOUND CONDITIONS TOLERABLE BUT NOTED A NUMBER OF POTENTIAL PROBLEMS. THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT (RTG) PROVIDED A PLACE FOR THE REFUGEES TO LIVE (IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL) BUT HAD PROVIDED NO OTHER ASSISTANCE. IN ORDER TO BUY FOOD, THE REFUGEES WERE SELLING THEIR POSSESSIONS. QUILISCH GAVE THE CHAIRMAN OF THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEE COMMITTEE 20,000 BAHT (ABOUT \$1,000) FOR FOOD. HE NOTED THAT THE CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICE HAD PROVIDED SOME FOOD AND MOSQUITO NETS BUT THAT CRS WAS APPARENTLY NO LONGER ASSISTING. (ALTHOUGH UNHCR HAS FUNDS, THEY HAVE DONE NOTHING TO HELP LONG YAI OR ANY OTHER REFUGEE CAMP. UNHCR SAYS IT MUST WAIT FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A FORMAL REQUEST FROM THE RTG BEFORE THEY CAN

PROVIDE ANY ASSISTANCE.)

2. QUILISCH NOTED THAT THERE WERE NO MAJOR HEALTH PROBLEMS BUT HE DESCRIBED THE SANITATION IN THE CAMP AS POOR. FOR THE ALMOST 500 VIETNAMESE THERE WERE ONLY EIGHT TOILETS. HE ALSO SAID THAT THERE WERE NOT ENOUGH MOSQUITO NETS AND BLANKETS TO GO AROUND.

3. QUILISCH SAID HE TALKED WITH THE TRAT PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR AND CAME AWAY WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WAS NOT INTERESTED IN THE PROBLEM. THE GOVERNOR DID MAKE A PITCH THAT THE ICRC GIVE HIM THE 20,000 BAHT INSTEAD OF GIVING IT DIRECTLY TO THE REFUGEES, ARGUING THAT HE COULD GET A DISCOUNT ON FOOD. THE ICRC DECLINED THE OFFER. PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS HAVE ALSO ALLOWED A NUMBER OF REFUGEES TO BUY THEIR WAY OUT OF THE CAMP. A NUMBER OF THESE HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY COME TO BANGKOK TO SEEK HELP FROM VARIOUS EMBASSIES.

4. AS IN ALL THE OTHER VIETNAMESE REFUGEE CAMPS IN THAILAND, THE REFUGEES LIVE IN FEAR OF BEING SENT BACK TO VIETNAM, AND THE RTG HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO STAY IN THAILAND INDEFINITELY. IN A NUMBER OF INSTANCES, REFUGEES HAVE DECIDED TO TAKE THEIR CHANCES BACK AT SEA RATHER THAN WAIT AROUND IN THE CAMPS FOR THE UNHCR OR THIRD COUNTRY EMBASSIES TO DO SOMETHING.

5. THE RTG PLANS TO CONCENTRATE ALL VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AT ONE CAMP IN THE SATTAHIP AREA. THERE HAS BEEN NOTHING DONE YET TO MOVE THOSE AT KLONG YAI TO SATTAHIP, HOWEVER, AND THE RTG HAS GIVEN NO TIMETABLE FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW CAMP. UNHCR HAS RECEIVED APPROVAL FROM THE RTG TO SURVEY THE REFUGEE CAMPS, BUT GIVEN THE SLOW PACE OF UNHCR'S ACTIVITY HERE, IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT HOW SOON THEY WILL VISIT KLONG YAI.

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6. FYI: THE ICRC IN BANGKOK HAS APPARENTLY HEARD THAT CONDITIONS IN KLONG YAI HAVE DETERIORATED SINCE QUILISCH'S LAST VISIT AND ARE PLANNING ON SENDING A REPRESENTATIVE TO CHECK ON THE SITUATION. WE WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED OF ANY NEW INFORMATION.

WHITEHOUSE

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